

THE WATER AND THE BLOOD

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A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
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*“But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side,
and forthwith came there out blood and water.”
John 19:34*

IT is with much fear and trembling that I usually stand upon this platform—not that I shrink before the face of the multitude, however large, but the weight of the subjects which I have continually to bring before your minds fills my own soul with awe. And yet it is with more than usual anxiety I approach my subject this evening, because although it is full of tender interest and touching pathos, I feel that without the unction of the Holy Spirit, it would be insipid and unprofitable, and yet, on the other hand, with that divine anointing, it is one of the richest topics that can possibly engage our meditation.

Readers of old theology will have remarked how constantly the fathers were accustomed to dwell upon the wounds of Jesus slain, and this fifth wound which penetrated His heart was peculiarly attractive to them. They said a great many things about it, some, indeed that were fanciful, but other remarks that were truly excellent and well deserve to be treasured up.

I would it were more the practice of believers nowadays than it is to study the very person of Christ, as well as the doctrines of the Gospel, and to learn the divine lessons which are discoverable in the wounds of Jesus as well as the sacred admonitions bequeathed to us by the words of His mouth.

One of these old divines says that Jesus Christ was typified by our first father, Adam. As Adam fell asleep, and out of his side Eve was taken, so Jesus slept upon the cross the sleep of death, and from His side, where the spear was thrust, His church was taken. He who redeemed us unto God by His blood, formed us as a peculiar people for Himself. The church is one with Him, she came out of His side, and as He looks upon her, He can say, “Thou art bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh, with my blood have I redeemed thee.” Others have been pleased to compare Christ to the Rock in the wilderness, which was smitten, and this spear-thrust is the great cleft in the rock. So, you remember, Toplady puts it—

*“Rock of Ages, cleft for me!
Let me hide myself in Thee.”*

And he clearly has this in view, for the next lines are—

*“Let the water and the blood
From Thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.”*

I do not consider this allusion fanciful, nor can I think it distorts the type. Moses hidden in the cleft of the rock, that he might see God’s glory, had not a standing place one-half so glorious as you and I have when, sheltered in the wounds of the Savior slain, we see the glorious justice and the infinite love of God reconciled in the person of the dying Lamb.

In the course of reading, I have met with some remarkable expressions in regard to this great wound of Christ. Some have called it, “a gate of heaven.” Why should I object to the title? Do we not enter into heaven through the wounds of Jesus? It is, of course, a metaphorical expression, yet quite allowable. If

the teaching is that there is no other way of access to God except through the rent veil of Christ's body—and that veil was rent in twain indeed when the soldier with the spear pierced His side—we may, without straining the thought, call that wound one of the gates of heaven. Another calls it “a celestial window, a window of paradise,” and we have versified that idea in one of our own familiar sonnets—

*“Look through Jesu’s wounds on me;
Him, and then the sinner see.”*

Another writer, carried away by the consideration of this spear-thrust, calls it “a palace of refuge.” A palace! Surely, never king had such an one, Solomon's palace of ivory was nothing like it. And what a refuge it is! When the poor heart, like the dove hunted by the hawk, needs a shelter, if it can fly to Jesu's wounds, it is sheltered from all its sins. Well does our song put it—

*“Come, guilty souls, and flee away
Like doves to Jesu’s wounds;
This is the welcome Gospel day,
Wherein free grace abounds.”*

I forget the name of the writer, who, in speaking upon his Master's wounds, seems to get so exalted and carried away by the subject that He calls this wound “the sacred well-head of the rivers of golden sand which cover all the earth”—two rivers, one of water and the other of blood, two quickening rivers, that carry life through the realms of death, two purifying rivers, cleansing the Augean stable of this filthy world, two mighty rivers, which bear the elect vessels onwards towards the sea of everlasting bliss, not one of them suffering shipwreck on the voyage, for this mighty river is too deep to have quicksands, too broad for the mariner to be cast away upon a rock-bound shore. I like the thought, and so let it be—the sacred well-head of that river of more than golden sand, the streams whereof make glad the multitudes of God's chosen throughout the earth.

In this wound of Christ, caused by the soldier, I discern four obvious meanings, it has many more, but these four will be enough to occupy our attention this evening.

I. It was THE MARK OF PROPHECY.

In order that it might be fully known that Jesus Christ was the Messiah that was to come, the prophets had given many marks, all of which must be found in the person of the man who should be the great Deliverer. Among the rest was this one that John quotes, “A bone of him shall not be broken.” This description concerned the paschal lamb, of which it was expressly said by the Lord, through Moses, that they were never to break a single bone of it. Its joints were to be separated after it had been roasted with fire, but not a bone was to be snapped.

Now, if Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God's passover, it is necessary and needful that He should never have a broken bone. And yet it looked as if His bones would be broken. The rough soldier brought up a great iron crowbar, and with an awful blow smashed the legs of the poor thief who hung on one side of our Lord, but half-dead, in order to hasten his dissolution. It was a strange thing that he passed by Christ, who was in the middle.

I know not what it was that made him do so—whether some flash of majesty beamed from that dead face, or whether some singular instinct checked his arm. But he went and administered the dreadful blow to the thief on the other side, and now he came to Christ, and perhaps raised the iron rod, when he saw that He was already dead. His head was hanging down upon His bosom, and the man saw clearly that there was no need to administer the deathblow to Him. It was a strange thing that his hands should be so restrained. The soldiery of that day were wanton enough. They were just as likely as not to have broken the bones even though the man were dead, but prophecy must have it so, and therefore not a bone of Jesus can be broken.

And then the prophet Zechariah had said concerning the Messiah, "They shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son." Now, up till that moment our Lord had not been pierced, except as to His hands and feet, and this would scarcely have been a carrying out of the word "pierced." Somebody would have said, "Well, but He never was pierced so as to cause His death, there was no such piercing as the text indicates."

But now that the soldier, moved by the mysterious impulse, lifts his lance and thrusts it deep into the side of Christ—now did prophecy set its mark upon Christ—now did history identify Him, the man without broken bones, yet the man whose side was pierced, Him for whom Israel should one day mourn, Him whom His enemies should one day confess to be their King.

My dear brethren and sisters, has it ever struck you with admiring wonder that Jesus Christ should answer to prophecies so complicated, and types so manifold—should answer even with coincidences the most minute to them all? It would be almost impossible to count the types of Christ which are given in the Old Testament. It would, perhaps, be easy to count the prophecies, but very difficult for anybody to form a character in which all these should be blended and fulfilled.

It has been said that if you were to give all these types and all these prophecies to the wisest of men of all ages, and say to them, "You are required to compile a biography of a man who shall answer to all these," they must certainly give it up in despair. You can find men who will make a key to fit any lock, by diligence of labor, no matter how complicated the mechanism may be, the thing may at last be done. But I will defy all the wisdom that ever was in humanity to form a key that will fit the exceedingly complex words of all the types of the Old Testament and all its prophecies.

How palpable then the evidence is. Our Lord Jesus Christ answers to them all. Just as the stamp in the wax answers to the seal that stamped it, the providence that transpired corresponds with the predictions that forestalled His course, He went as it was written of Him. There He is, and He fulfils types that look the most opposite, and prophecies which seem to run counter to one another.

If anybody thinks that the stories told by the four evangelists are spurious, I would suggest to him to go and write a fifth—to try to write another that would as much correspond with the Old Testament, and with the other four, as those four do with the Old Testament and with each other, and when that task was done, I would then give him another problem to solve before he could have reasonable ground for suspicion that Jesus of Nazareth was not the Messiah.

Account for the incredulity of the Jews in the presence of those evidences that have produced conviction among the Gentiles upon any other hypotheses than that which ratifies their own Scriptures. If the Old Testament be the Word of God, it seems marvelous to us that men do not receive Jesus as being the Shiloh that was to come, the promised Messiah, the Prince of the kings of the earth.

Jewish unbelief amazes us, yet I suppose if we judged aright, our own want of faith in Jesus, notwithstanding the rational credit we give to His mission as a popular creed, is more amazing still. If that be gross unbelief which rejects Christ while acknowledging the Old Testament, what shall I say of you who refuse allegiance to Him, and yet profess to believe both the Old and the New? If they that receive the first yet stumble at the second, what shall I say of those who receive both and yet, over the head of this double belief professed, give not their hearts to the crucified Son of God, and put not their trust in the merit of His precious blood, but still continue afar off from Him by wicked works?

Some time ago, when in Italy, at a town on the Italian side of the Alps, I saw one Sunday afternoon, in a quiet walk alone, a sight which struck me very much, and which remains fixed upon my memory. There was outside the town a mountain, all the way up the sides of which were different representations of the progress of our Lord, from the garden where Judas betrayed Him to the place of His resurrection. The figures were as large as life, carved in either stone or wood, and painted to imitate nature.

When I got to the very summit of the hill, there was a church. There was no one in it, and I pushed open the door and went in. All was still. It was a large building, and all around it were images of the prophets and the apostles. There stood Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, and all the rest—one knew the

usual portraits of them, and up in the dome, at the very top of the church, was a large and striking image of the Savior.

Now, what struck me about the church was this—that the images of those prophets and apostles who stood there had their fingers all pointed upwards, so that, when I went in, I could not help looking up to the top to see what they were pointing at. All round the church there were the words, in Latin, “Moses and the prophets spake concerning him,” and there stood Moses and the prophets, carved in stone, and all pointing to Him.

Isaiah had a little scroll in his hand, on which was written, “The LORD hath made to meet on him the iniquity of us all.” Jeremiah had a scroll in his hand, on which was written, “Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me.” I think the church just represented the truth in that case. It is even so. All the prophets stand as a complete circle of distinct testifiers, and with uplifted fingers, they all concur with John the baptist when he said, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” They all point to Christ. If you read the life of Christ, and then read what they said of Him, you will be persuaded that this is He which was to come.

II. But to pass on, we may look upon the spear-thrust in the side of Christ as THE ESCUTCHEON OF SHAME.

While our Lord lived, He was the subject of every form of scorn. He was scourged as none but a felon might be according to the Roman law. He was spat upon and mocked, as even a felon ought not to have been. That thorn crown, that scepter of reed, and that old scarlet cloak—who could have invented a more shameful insignia for One who was greater than all the kings on the earth, but who was brought exceeding low? And our Lord’s death itself was a great portion of His shame. It was a shame for Him to die, and ignominy for Him to die the death of hanging on the cross.

Heraldry has so emblazoned the symbol that we do not ordinarily apprehend the real shame to which Christ was exposed. Were I to preach to you tonight that a certain man who was hanged was very God, people would begin to say, “Why, you preach of one who died on the gallows as a felon.” Literally and truly, that is just how Jesus Christ did die, according to the customs of His times. Crucifixion was to the Romans what hanging is to us, only it was worse. It was more shameful, for crucifixion was reserved for the very worst of crimes. Not all murderers were so punished, but only the worst and vilest crimes with murder to aggravate them received this opprobrious doom.

People hang crosses round their necks, and wear them as ornaments, I wonder whether they would make ornaments of gibbets, yet it means that. It is just the same thing, and this is the shame of Christ. This is the very shame in which Paul rejoiced and gloried, that Jesus Christ was not ashamed to be a shame, that He was willing to be made a shame and a curse for us, that He was content to be treated with all the scorn that human malignity and inhuman cruelty could heap upon Him.

But beloved, when Christ was dead, they might certainly have ceased from their scorn. But no, the brutal Roman soldiery were not very nice as to what they did with living bodies. They would not, therefore, be particular as to what they did with dead bodies, therefore this soldier, in a mere freak of wanton brutality, thrust his lance into the Savior’s heart. It was the last kick of the old enemy. It was, as it were, the last of the spittle from the foul mouth of human slander and hatred. It was the last thrust that human malice could give to the Lord of life and glory. I see in this the mark, the crowning emblem of the shame which He endured.

Well, and what then? Why, it should teach us, dear friends, what a shameful thing sin must be, for though Christ was no sinner, yet when our sins were laid upon Him, see how God treated Him, and permitted Him to be treated as an outcast, to be covered with the utmost shame. Ah sin, what a shameful thing you must be! Blush, Christian, that you should be guilty of it. Blush again that you do not blush oftener. Be ashamed that you are not ashamed of sin, and be offended that your heart should be so stolid over a thing so detestable.

Another thought springs up, namely, that if Christ was put to so much shame for us, how glad we ought to be if we are allowed sometimes to be put to shame for Him! Oh! there are some people who

cannot bear shame, they can endure anything else but ridicule and laughter. As John Bunyan says, “of all villains, Shame is the most shameless, for he will go and make sport and fun of the Christian’s virtues, and mock at that which he ought to admire.”

Well, child of God, supposing today you have your face spat upon for Christ, ’twere scarcely worthwhile to wipe it off. Ah! if you had to live a dying life, to be immured in a dungeon, or to live upon the rack, as long as it was done for Him who bore all this for you, the thought might sweeten the wormwood, and turn the gall into honey, that you were thus honored to have fellowship with Him in His sufferings. I leave that view of this wound of Christ with you, praying that it may nerve your hearts with a glorious courage, as you see Jesus thus shamefully wounded for you.

III. This lance wound was THE SEAL OF DEATH UPON OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

His enemies were so determined to put Him to death that they dragged His life out of its principal organ, and then they pierced it, namely, the heart. It was not possible that Jesus Christ could have lived another moment longer, even had He been alive at that time, but when the heart was touched, death must come.

Those who understand anatomy tell us that the pericardium around the heart was pierced, and they say that from that there flowed the blood and the water, but I am extremely doubtful whether the pericardium in any state whatever could have yielded a sufficient quantity of lymph, for though there is water there, there is only a small quantity.

In the state in which our Savior was, blood and water might have been found naturally in His heart, but only in a very small and infinitesimal quantity. The fountain that flowed therefrom was miraculous, not natural but supernatural, or if natural, yet so exalted and so increased in quantity as to become in itself supernatural.

Certainly, however, the piercing of His heart was the indication to all mankind that “He was dead already.” Now, little as that may seem in the eyes of those of you who do not love Him, it is a most important thing to those who trust Him, for recollect, if Jesus Christ had not died, you and I must have perished. It was of no avail for our expiation that He sweat great drops of blood unless He had perfected the sacrifice. The law required life, if Christ had not laid down His life, the law would have required ours. In due time, our souls would have been cast into the second death on account of sin, if Jesus had not died, actually and truly died.

But we are quite sure about it now, for His heart was pierced. Indeed, I may say that this is the one keystone of the whole Gospel system, for if Jesus did not die then, we have no resurrection, for if He died not then, He did not rise, and if we have no evidence of resurrection, the whole of our religion becomes a falsehood. But brethren, He did die. His soul quitted His body. That corpse that was taken by Joseph of Arimathaea was as lifeless as any that was ever committed to the sepulcher, and He did rise again, in proof to us that we who die, and those we have parted with on the confines of this mortal life, who are, alas! all truly dead, shall certainly rise again, and in their flesh shall see God.

This is a simple truth for you to hear, perhaps, but never did angel have such weighty news to tell as I have told you tonight, that God was made flesh, the very God that made heaven and earth took upon Himself our nature, and as such He died, literally died for us. The God-man, the Mediator, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, and the Son of Mary, died, was crucified, and had His heart pierced for us, and if we depend upon this, we may rest secure. If He died, then we need not die. If He died for us, then we cannot die the second death. If Jesus was punished in our stead, the sting of death is taken away, the law is satisfied, and every soul that believeth in Him shall have life eternal.

IV. But I cannot tarry longer upon that, and therefore I come to the fourth point. This heart wound of Christ is also to be called THE SOURCE OF PURITY.

The text tells us that there issued from it a double flood of blood and water. We are not at a loss to explain this because the apostle John, in his epistle, has told us that our Lord “came by water and blood; not by water only, but by water and blood” [See sermon #3252, By Water and Blood], and he explains it by the

connection that Christ came into the world by blood to take away the guilt of sin, and by water to take away the power of sin, by blood to remove the punishment, by water to remove the filth.

Now, dear friends, let us say that *there is no blood and no water that can wash away sin anywhere but in Christ*. All the blood of bullocks could not take away sin, though offered by Aaron himself, the father of the Levitical priesthood, and all the water in the world, though consecrated by bishops, and cardinals, and popes, cannot take away a single spot of iniquity.

The only blood that can cleanse us from God's wrath is the blood of Jesus Christ Himself, and the only water that can wash out of us the damning stain of sin is the water which came from Jesus Christ's heart. If you want to be thus doubly washed, go to the Son of God for the washing. Go nowhere else, I pray you, for every other trust is but a delusion and a lie.

Jesus Christ can put away the guilt of every sin. Though you have been a drunkard, an adulterer, a whoremonger, a thief, a murderer, yet the blood of Jesus Christ can wash you from the accumulated filth of years, and the water from Christ's side can take away your propensities to sin, and change your nature, and make you holy instead of filthy, can make you pure in heart instead of polluted in spirit. Nothing else can do it.

No lie was ever more extraordinary than the lie that baptismal water can regenerate the soul. I marvel more and more that I should find myself living in an age of such idiots, and have almost come to think that Carlyle was right when he spoke of our nation as "consisting of twenty million people, mostly fools." So it seems to be, or else such a dogma as this would have been kicked out of the universe years since, and banished once and forever to the limbo of lunacy as an outrage on common sense.

Is God the Holy Spirit confined to water, so that the priest's dropping it on the child's brow can work regeneration in the child's soul? Believe it not, it is a foul falsehood! But hold ye to this. That which alone can work regeneration is the water from the side of Christ, and when faith can get that, and trust that, the matter is done. Faith relies upon the sacred double flood, then the heart is renewed, the man is changed, the soul is saved by Jesus Christ.

Remember too, that *the water and the blood flowed from the same place, and flowed together*, and therefore, if a man would be saved, He must have the two. Tens of thousands would like to escape from hell, but they have no wish to escape from sin. Are there not multitudes who are very anxious to get rid of the punishment, but are not at all concerned to be delivered from the habit of iniquity? Oh, yes! the drunkard would fain be forgiven, but he would like to keep to his tippling. Yes, the lecherous man would gladly have his constitution restored, and his iniquity blotted out, but he must go to his dens of infamy again. Such is not the religion of Christ.

The religion of Christ demands of us that if we take Christ, we should take Him for the double purpose, to pardon for sins past, and to deliver from sins to come. I think it was Celsus, the ancient philosopher, who jeered at the great Christian advocates, saying, "Your Master, Christ, receives all the filth of the universe into His church, He tells you to go about to find out thieves, drunkards, harlots, and such like, and to tell them to come to Him. Your religion is nothing better than a lazar house, into which you thrust lepers."

"Ay," said he who argued with him, "you have spoken well. We do receive them as into a lazar house, but we heal them, sir, we heal them, and while into the one door the spiritually and morally blind, and halt, and maimed, and lame do come in as they are, the great Physician touches them with His grace, and cleanses them with the water and the blood, and they are not what they were any longer."

Now, am I addressing one man who feels that he is saved by faith, and yet he is sinning as he used to do? Give up that belief, sir, or it will ruin you. I pray you, do not indulge in it, for it is a delusion of Satan. Do I address one man who has a hope that perhaps he can so trust Christ as to be saved, and yet continue to live in his own wicked way? If anyone has told you that, he has told you falsely. Rest assured that you are mistaken.

Christ never came to be the minister of sin. He came to save us, not in our sins, but from our sins. He will forgive us all manner of iniquities, but not if we love the iniquity, and continue in it. If you hug sin

to your bosom, the viper will sting you, and no power, either human or divine, can extract the poison unless the viper itself is taken away. You must have both the water and the blood, and I pray that you may have both.

Now, Christians, I have done when I have put to you one question. Answer it, and answer it truthfully. It is this—Beloved friends, have you got such a hold of Christ as you should have in His double capacity as your Pardoner and your Sanctifier? I know you plead the blood for your remission, I know that is all your hope. I know that the blood of Christ is your comfort and your hope, but have you got the water quite as fully?

You have a bad temper, perhaps. Well, it is a pitiable circumstance, but surely, if Christ can forgive a bad temper, He can remove a bad temper too. Did you ever bring your bad temper to Christ to have it washed away with the water? You should have done so, for He can do it.

Perhaps you have got an envious spirit—a murmuring spirit—naturally so, you are generally depressed and downhearted. Did you ever believe in the power of Christ to kill envy, and to lift you up above murmuring? You should do so. You believe that Christ can forgive this sin. Well, that is through the power of the blood, but do you think that the water is less potent than the blood—that Christ can forgive what He cannot subdue? Oh, think not so! Think as well of the Spirit and His sanctifying power as of Christ and His justifying righteousness.

“Well,” says one, “I have a besetting sin which I do not think I shall ever quite overcome,” My dear brother, why not? It strikes me that the Christian ought to get his greatest victories from his weakest points, and if you have a besetting sin, I think you ought to be distinguished by its opposite virtue.

I do not know that it was so, but I always have a notion that Moses was by his natural constitution a thoroughly quick-tempered man. I think so from the fact that, when he saw the Egyptian smiting the Israelite, he did not stop a minute, but he slew him at once, and hid him in the sand. That looks to me to be the breaking out of the real Moses. But what did he become by the grace of God? Why, after his spirit was subdued, he became the meekest of men, and often was quiet where you and I would have spoken.

Now, why should it not be so with us? It strikes me that the worst tempered man who becomes a Christian ought to make this a strong point, and to strive to become the best tempered.

There are some Christians who naturally have a little weakness in their hand, and cannot open it well. If they get a little money in it, they are very apt to get their joints tied together very tightly, but when grace comes in, I think they should try to defeat the devil by being more than ordinarily liberal, so that, whereas other Christians might be content to give less, they say to Satan, “O my enemy, you have held me in bondage in this way, but in wherever else you may get the upper hand of me, you never shall in this, for I will take care that whenever you tell me not to give a shilling, I will give two, in order to let you see that you are no master of mine, and that I have got rid of the foul sin of illiberality!”

Do let us each one act upon this great truth, that as Christ has the power to forgive us our sin, so also He has the power to cleanse it away.

And my dear brethren and sisters, let us get closer to Christ. Let us be bedewed oftener than we have been before with the water and with the blood. Let us live in the spirit of this double purification, and be it ours to find this blessed stream lead us right up to the heart of Christ, from which it flowed, that we may understand the everlasting love which dwells there deep in its eternal fountains, and may rejoice and be glad in it all our days.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

JOHN 19:23-37

Verse 23. *Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments,—*

They had already stripped Him, no element of shame was wanting in His substitution for us. He stooped as low as our sins could have thrust us, that He might bring us up from the very depths of degradation and shame.

23-24. *And made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith; They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.*

Quite unaware of the ancient prophecy, yet in complete accord with divine predestination, these soldiers did exactly according to the eternal purposes of God. It is very wonderful how, in practice, the free agency of man tallies exactly with the predestination of God. We need not inquire how it is, but we may admire that it is so.

“These things therefore the soldiers did,” yet the motive which swayed them was not the fulfillment of the divine will, but simply the common sense thought that it would be a pity to spoil such a garment by rending it, and partly also by that innate love of gambling which is found everywhere, in every age, so that often men would sooner run the hazard of winning all than take the safe one fourth which might fall to their lot. Let us reverently adore the whole scheme of providence by which God’s determinate purpose is carried out in every jot and tittle, while the free agency of man is left unfettered.

25. *Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.*

These gracious women stood by the cross, we call them the feebler sex, but we must grant that they are the stronger of the two in anything which has to do with pure disinterested love. Yield the first place to them.

26. *When Jesus therefore saw his mother,—*

Here was another pang for Him, He could not be spared anywhere. He must recollect in His death everything that would cause Him grief, “When Jesus therefore saw His mother,—

26-27. *And the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.*

There was no specific direction given to John to entertain Mary, it was quite enough for the Lord to call his attention to her by saying “Behold thy mother.” How I wish we were always in such a state of heart that we did not need specific precepts, a hint would suffice! Dear friends, do not need pressing or driving to holy duty, be not as bullocks that must be goaded, but rather have within you such a spring of love that it shall be a delight to do anything that may give joy to the heart of the Well-beloved. When you see Him on the cross, is there anything you can deny Him? Will you not think spontaneously of what you can do to please Him?

28. *After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.*

There was yet a little more to be done, all the great things were accomplished, but He would keep even the least particles of prophecy, so He cried, “I thirst.”

29-30. *Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar,—*

He did receive that, He had refused the drugged draught which they had first offered to Him to lull His pain, but He accepted this, which was simply weak wine, no doubt a little sour, possibly bitter. When He “had received the vinegar,—

30. *He said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost* [See sermon #421, It is Finished and #2344, Christ’s Dying Word for His Church].

Incarnate love has fulfilled its self-imposed task. Jesus, as the Substitute for sinners, was condemned to die, and He died that He might finish the work of our redemption.

***“It is Finished.’
Hear the dying Savior cry.”***

31. *The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.*

To prevent a ceremonial error, they are willing to commit brutal cruelty, indeed, they had already committed the more brutal cruelty of putting Christ to death. How particular some men are about some merely human rubric, yet the divine precepts of the law they violate with impunity. God save us from a conscience which will stick at some minute point which is of no consequence, but will allow us to commit great sin!

We have heard of a Spanish bandit who confessed to his priest, after having murdered a great many persons, not his robberies and his murders, but the fact that a drop of blood had spurted on his lips on a Friday, and thus he had defiled the fast day by taking animal food! Ah me! conscience is a strange thing, yet some call it “the vicegerent of God.” I believe it is no such thing, but that it very soon becomes as depraved as any other power of the human mind, we have need of far more than conscience to keep us right.

32. *Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with Him.*

With a huge iron bar smashing the great bones of their legs.

33-34. *But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.*

See how, even after death, His heart its tribute poured out for us. We have not only the love of Christ’s heart blessing us while He lives, but after He died there was the stream of blood and water to cleanse us from sin’s guilt and power.

35-37. *And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced* [See sermon #1956, On the Cross After Death].

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